Agonal Respiration

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Agonal Respiration

by Apocalyptic_Space_They

Summary

"From a modern perspective, Fairy Tales offer us an escape into magical worlds where anything is possible. Historically however, fairy tales served another more sinister purpose. Used to enforce society's rules and expectations. Under all the mystical glitter, fairy tales always carried the same warning: Choose very carefully children. Live a moral self sacrificing life dedicated to God and country... or a horrible monster will slide out of the dark and eat you up.

Perhaps in a world with Hannibal Lecter and Will Graham in it, we would do well to heed the warning."

— On the History of Fairytales & Modern Monsters, F. Cassandra Lounds

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All it took was one second to change everything, one second to lose it all.

Will Graham realized one second to late that he'd made a most horrible mistake

Then Hannibal's blade was in his belly. His whole life washing away on a tide of blood & heartbreak

The Chesapeake Ripper never made mistakes, never left anything behind that he didn't specifically choose to leave there, and Hannibal Lecter was The Chesapeake Ripper. There could be no mistake, no second chance, no putting the teacup back together.

It was over

Right?

Notes

This is a repost

In the worst stroke of dumb luck on the face of the planet, I accidentally orphaned my long Hannibal S3 reprise fic series.

I'm pretty sick about it.

You can see the original under the series name "You Taste Like Blood and Cherry Wine"

See the end of the work for more notes

With My Dying Breath

"From a modern perspective, Fairy Tales offer us an escape into magical world's where anything is possible. Historically however, fairy tales served another more sinister purpose. Used to enforce society's rules and expectations. Under all the mystical glitter, fairy tales always carried the same warning: Choose very carefully children. Live a moral self sacrificing life dedicated to God and country... or a horrible monster will slide out of the dark and eat you up.

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Will Graham was deceased, his life was over, he bled out on Hannibal's tastefully stylish floor on a Friday, because Hannibal wouldn't be rude to his patients by ending the work week early. Gutting Will was a completely different sort of thing, that was fine apparently.

Hannibal ripped Will's heart out through the gaping wound in his abdomen, left him on the floor watching his own blood puddle, no doubt comfortably carrying all the little shattered pieces on his way to somewhere beautifully cultured... France or Italy.

His body however, traitorous thing that it was, refused to die of heart break or blood loss, and so he lived, more or less intact... more or less.

Though who he was now in the wreckage Will Graham left behind, he wasn't entirely sure. He couldn't bring himself to care one way or the other since Hannibal left without him. What was the point of continuing a life he'd only just learned to live without the one person who'd made it worth living?

Life, what a cruel joke. The Greeks were right. Life was one epic fucking tragedy, then you died and the gods laughed. He could feel the gods laughing at him, sick with a loss of his own creation. If only he'd understood exactly what Hannibal meant with all that cryptic teacup shit.

He desperately wished to whisper in his past self's ear. Abigail's the tea cup, not you. Pay attention, he's not trying to break you, he's trying free you. Remember Miriam. Remember Mischa. Think about what he told you. He really does love you, I think. He's not like the rest of them. He'll cry if you betray him. He'll cry while he guts you, so he's not tempted to forgive you, so he can't take you with him even after the betrayal. I think he really loved you... and you'll never sleep again for missing him, because you love him too.

But even if he could rewind time and unbreak the teacup, his past self was much to sure he understood the nature of the game. He never would've listened. So this slow agonizing death was inevitable.

Hannibal was right, fuck the gods. They were far to mercurial, to cruel to abide.

Will was discharged from the hospital on a Wednesday morning for no particular reason. That's just how it ended up, random happenstance, something felt broken inside him. He didn't have the energy to find the patterns, to see. Everything was just what it was or wasn't. He couldn't coordinate the energy to know or care which was which. What was the point? There wasn't anyone to go home to, his life was ashes.

All the Remnants of Will Graham's life were burned away. Now without Hannibal there to nurture the embers into something precious and beautiful, he couldn't burn anew, spluttering, fading instead. Silence slid over his eyes and settled like an invasive species of fish in the darkest cockles of his broken heart.

Home looked barren, forbidding and lonely without Hannibal there to quietly fuss over him. His absence sucked all the oxygen out of the room, sent all of Wolf Trap spinning into the cold abyss of space. A hollow desperate longing permeated every unending second. He couldn't bear it. No choice but to keep bearing it.

There was an absurd pile of mail on his coffee table from his weeks in the hospital. Had someone been checking his mail? He wished the dogs were here, not stuck at some high end government subsidized boarding kennel. He didn't have the energy to deal with any of that today. He loosely scooped the pile of mail up out of habit, collapsing into the couch before he could decide what to do with it.

Flinching from so much strain on his still healing body, Will let the mail cascade across the couch beside him uncontrolled. He was so very exhausted, his body slowly tipped sideways of it's own accord. He knew he should do something about it, sit up properly. He didn't. Eventually it vaguely registered that he was face down in the mail pile. Eh, that was fine. The mail could wait, life could wait. He wanted to dream of Hannibal, touching his face

the knife sliding into his stomach like butter, Hannibal so careful. 1-, 2-, 3-, oh god please

You promised to take me with you

You always keep your promises

A knife in his stomach with laser precision, Hannibal chewing, a small knowing quirk of his lips. Oh God. Help. Please

Jolting adrenaline slammed through Will's chest, not fear, no something else entirely curled through his guts, licking at his bones.

Focus Will, See Me

But there was nothing left to see Hannibal. You left me behind.

Eyes swimming in unshed tears, a whisper became the bay of hounds finding their prey, then an ice pick in the temple. It's sharp metallic clarity working with none of Hannibal's surgical precision. What had he noticed somewhere on the edges of his awareness? Somewhere in the part of him that was still looking for Hannibal, that would always be looking for Hannibal.

Think

I can't, it doesn't matter anymore

Find the pieces Will

I can't! I don't want to!

Put the teacup back together

You left me behind

You have all the pieces

I can't, not without you

Find them

You left me alone

See

It hurts To much Hannibal

I'm right here

"Oh God"

My beautiful brilliant boy, you're never alone in the dark anymore

There was something on the edge of his memory, the design radiant like Hannibal's eyes in the dark, glorious and dangerous. He just had to remember, There. Words trickling through his recent memory.

.. ..

... . Chesapeake

.... Hannibal

.. ... Iconoclast

... Retribution

.. Obfuscate

. Nascent

... The fuck?

His brain used to be better at putting things together, he was out of practice. Make it make sense. It was... Something, Hannibal bringing him breakfast at the hotel

**I don't find you interesting*

*You will**

It was... the shrike, a poem framed in blood, a question inside an invitation, inside a gift.

Can you see me?

It was a Midwestern silo filled with a most beautiful death portrait. Poetry writ in blood and bone. A demi god looking down on mankind from his lonely perch, only his lover looks back. Truth, passion, love held only in each other's eyes.

Can you know me?

~~*yes*~~

It was his friend standing exposed over the corpse of another killer who wanted to use Will's vocal chords to serenade his monster.

Can you love me?

~~*Oh yes*~~

There.

It was Chiron. Chiron who taught Patroclus to be a surgeon. Chiron who's disinterest in the pride of humans and gods alike that allowed Achilles and Patroclus to be together. He alone believed that their devotion to each other had value. His was a safe place where no one could see their love.

Will's hands trembled with the force of the realization. He focused his eyes, trying to make sense of whatever was tickling his subconscious into alertness.

Catch the scent

He levered himself up slowly, hissing at the tenderness in his waist still. What was it that set off the internal alarm bells? There was a ton of mail... The random flotsam of a life that felt past it's expiration date. Something there? He stared at the pile for awhile furious at how slow his mind wa-

There! Half buried in a stack of LL Bean, Land's End, Bass Pro, and Chewy catalogs. It looked like a bill.

Can you taste it Will?

Chiron's Mystic Mountain

Long term storage & P.O. boxes

So secure even the gods will wonder

Could it be? It had to be, didn't it? It had to be. Trying to school his nerves in case he was wrong, Will ripped open the generic commercial envelope. Inside was a tidy letter, some paperwork, and a small metallic key that slid noiselessly into his lap. The letter read.

"Dear Mr Graham,

As previously discussed when you secured your PO box with us, we are forwarding all relevant materials to the address you provided. We sincerely appreciate your attention to time and detail. It's been a pleasure doing business with you and your husband. We look forward to seeing you soon"

There's blood in the water

Will's world narrowed down to a tiny pinprick of laser tight focus. Burning attention, instinct, The Hunt.

The body that carries those drives for him all but irrelevant. He had to go now, go there. He had to find Hannibal. He had to catch that old scent again.

All the paper work was folded, neat and utilitarian. It went in his pocket with the key and his wallet. Cash. He had cash. Before he died on Hannibal's floor, they'd planned on being hard to track after. Making moves in the dark, quick and silent. They planned for unplannable things, so he already had cash in his wallet. Good. Thank you. He didn't run to the car. He wanted to but he didn't need to. He could feel his path telescoping out from this decision, the fronds built of choices that lived in the valley of his mind, a landscape blooming instantly. Intent, desire, choices, everything falling into place again.

Clarity

Damn, it felt good.

Can you feel me now sweet Will?

He blinked and was already there, a simple well appointed office in a completely run of the mill lock box company. No lost time, just focus.

The secret to people William is not in hiding things from them, it's giving them the right thing to find

The right thing, ahh yes.

Will stepped up to the register, smiling, a little bashful.

"Hi, I'm so sorry, I'm a little embarrassed. My husband set up this lock box for us a few months ago. Silly me I forgot to come get it on time. Our anniversary is tomorrow, he's gonna kill me, literally, if I don't grab it immediately. You know he already puts up with me, takes such good care of me. I'd really like to not ruin our anniversary because I was being an idiot."

The girl behind the counter, took his paperwork and key barely looking at any of his personal information as she pulled his account up, so wrapped up in the romance and drama of the story he'd spun. She cooed at Will. Perfect.

"Aww, that's so sweet. Why can't I find a man who can admit when he's wrong?"

Will adopted an overwrought embarrassed expression.

"Don't I know it. It took me a while to figure it out, how to do it, to be the man he deserves, but he's worth the work"

"Ohhh, that's sooo romantic. I hope your husband knows how lucky he is Mr Graham. It says you have a PO box and a safe deposit box. Were you opening both today?"

"Yes please. So do I, thanks for your help."

--

The private viewing room was so pedestrian, it didn't feel nearly cloak and dagger enough for Will's current purpose. Taking a deep breath, he tried to center himself.

"My Name is Will Graham. I am- not in the fucking mood for this actually. What the hell is this Hannibal? Should I hope? Can I? I want to. I want to hope for you. I know what happened. I know where we went wrong. I want to hope... for us"

~~*I want there to be an us Hannibal*~~

He was closer to the river, closer now then it'd been since he woke up. It ran muddy and sluggish around his ankles, lapping quietly at the seams in his soul, asking to flow through him again.

One last deep breathe, the PO box first. There was a smorgasbord of assorted post cards in the box, from various locations around the world. Most of them were meaningless, distractions in case Will sold him out again. The cathedral, the Italian university, and the overgrown Lithuanian estate... Those were real. Those were important. Only the postcard of the cathedral had anything written besides the address, saying only, ***and perhaps it is the greater grief, after all, to be left on earth when another is gone.***

That was Achilles too.

Have you caught my scent, my lamb?

Plink. Plink. Plink. Behind his eyes, fat crimson drops of blood sprinkled unevenly over the river as it swirled languid around his shins.

The lock box only held a smallish box wrapped in pristine black tissue paper with classically beautiful golden ribbon. Will tried to imagine Hannibal stopping on his way out of town, on the run, to wrap a present. It had to be of incredible importance. Right? It had to be.

Unsure how exactly to feel, Will was scrupulously careful unwrapping the present. He couldn't bear to ruin any more of Hannibal's precious gifts. It took him a second to understand what he was looking at. Finally it clicked.

It was the shirt Hannibal was wearing when he stabbed Will, unwashed, lovingly folded. Sitting in the place his heart would be, was the very knife that he'd stabbed Will with, still stained dark with his blood. This was an orgy of evidence offered like a sacred sacrifice. The Chesapeake Ripper never left evidence.

Hannibal was giving Will, The Ripper... no he was giving Will all of himself. History and life blood, the foundations of what makes a man whoever he is.

Do you understand now Will? Can you see?

Will carefully tucked all of the postcards into the box with the shirt and the knife. The strange gift that felt... precious, a piece of Hannibal's soul. He needed to get home, he needed to think... But first he needed to renew those boxes just in case.

The thought of losing this small connection to Hannibal made his stomach cramp. When he told the young lady at the desk he'd like to renew both boxes for a year. She nodded cheerfully and then gave him a large manilla envelope full of papers, which apparently she was only supposed to pass on in the event that he renewed the boxes.

He wondered idly how Hannibal always got people to do his bidding so easily, even as he himself was probably doing exactly what Hannibal wanted. At one time that would've filled him with guilt and self loathing, not anymore. He and Hannibal wanted, no needed, the same things, besides each other which wasn't worth denying anymore. They needed each other, they needed a life free from the hypocrisy and lies society swaddled itself in, and the hunt. They both needed the hunt.

This was their design... or it could be. It would be. He just had to find his pack, his person.

Hannibal.

As soon as Will got home again he tore open the mystery envelope, a healthy sense of paranoia about who might be watching him made him stay calm. There was the title to a sail boat. Not just any sailboat though, it was expensive, fast, very fast and decked out for crossing the ocean with a one man crew. The rest of the papers were a series of purchase order slips for the necessities a person would need if he was sailing across the ocean. If he was sailing to Italy.

Can you find me Will?

Will picked up his phone and started making calls. He had a lot to sort out before he left.

Will you know me when you do?

In his mind's eye, the river glints scarlet, holding him safe until his rebirth. The hunt horn sounds in his bones, the wolf howls, the hounds bay in answer.

The hunt calls you home William, what will you do?

Will took in all the papers spread across his kitchen table, the foundation for a one way boat trip to Europe, and for the first time since he woke up with a physical hole in his stomach and an emotional hole in his heart, Will Graham smiled a small vicious smile.

Well obviously Hannibal, I'll answer the call

.

.

.

.

.

.

The hunt was on ~~*finally*~~

~~*Can you feel me at your back Hannibal? I've got your scent now, I won't lose you again. Never again*~~

The wolves howl, the hunting hounds bay, and Will Graham smiled

This was gonna be fun

If I Held My Breath for you

Will sat staring at the satellite phone for a long while. Ever since he'd gotten the packet of receipts and claim slips he'd been going through the process of getting everything together without thinking about what exactly it meant that he was doing it. It was easier to think of it as a game of high stakes hide and seek. He had very carefully not thought about what exactly was at the end of this journey but he couldn't ignore it anymore. He couldn't ignore all the little secrets he was hiding from himself.

just don't think about it

But he had to think about it now.

Abigail, I'm so sorry. Will wished he could put the blame of Abigail's death squarely on Hannibal, but he knew that wasn't true. He knew he'd been letting Hannibal see little hints of his betrayal in hopes that he'd either get left behind or killed for real.

Either way he wouldn't have to choose, he couldn't bear to choose. Hannibal would be free of him, free to hunt without all of Will's constant despair dragging him down. He would be free to be the brilliant beautiful ruthless creature he was. Free of all of Will's conflicted moralizing, fighting, lashing out. He could be with someone that wasn't always snarling, biting, scratching, and tearing at everything around them like a wounded animal... or he could at least be with someone easier to manage, someone like Alana... or Bedelia.

Bedelia... Bedelia was everything Will could never be. As much as he hated that, as much as he hated her, maybe it should be her by Hannibal's side, not him. What had he done to deserve that sacred place but betray him?

He was drowning in his inability to choose between what he needed and what the world told him he had to be... so he rolled the dice and hoped Hannibal would just kill him, take away the choice, get it over with.

Will knew Hannibal was in love with him, that he'd said as much at least, but how could he really be? He'd get over the loss. He'd have to. Why wouldn't he? Still... It was a cruel thing, to ask Hannibal to kill him, after he'd already told Will he was in love with him. It was cruel, he knew it was a cruel thing to wonder, to test... to want to see... to need.

Because he did need to see, he had to look into Hannibal's eyes when he asked him to kill him, he had to know. It was the only way he'd ever know for sure if Hannibal's feelings were real or another game. It didn't seem possible that Hannibal Lecter, the devil himself could be in love with him, Will Graham the hypocritical failure. The pathetic, mean, twitchy, little creep with no social skills or standing... and way to many dogs for polite society.

In the moment he really thought Hannibal would just kill him, save him from having to make an impossible choice, then they'd both be free of the tainted legacy of Will Graham. It was sensible, reasonable, a logical expectation.

But then since when did Hannibal Lecter make reasonable logical choices about him? Never that's when, so he should've known better. Not knowing was another piece of the betrayal he'd carry now, his lack of faith.

In the end Hannibal knew, of course he did. It was Hannibal after all. He understood immediately that Will was attempting to sacrifice himself out of self pitying self loathing. He saw right through him, like a clear summer stream, and said no emphatically in the only language he knew Will would understand, violence and responsibility. He said it with a knife.

So it appeared the Chesapeake Ripper actually did have one boundary, one place so sacred he would not sully it with death. He would not kill Will Graham, even when he deserved it, even when he was begging for it... and if it took him punctuating that refusal with the loss of another life that mattered to both of them. If he knew a failure of responsibility was the only thing that Will would take seriously enough to stop trying to force Hannibal's hand... if that's what he had to do to keep Will alive, so be it. He'd do what needed to be done. Hannibal knew all the best and worst aspects of Will, including this. He knew and understood, embraced all those little conjoined bloody bits of his soul.

He hated how romantic if felt that he was the only person Hannibal wouldn't kill. He hated how romantic it felt that Hannibal understood that he valued the weight of his responsibility more then the weight of his own life, he wasn't sure how he felt about any of that, so he sat staring at the phone. He knew beyond the shadow of a doubt, when he heard Hannibal's voice, if he heard it. If he was really forgiven, if Hannibal was truly out there waiting for him, that whatever was left of the shape and texture of Will Graham would be well and truly dead, expunged, excised, gone forever. He'd never be able to come back to this life and live day after unexceptional day for the rest of his life as miserable wet cat Will Graham.

He would always be Hannibal Lecter's creature in the same way Hannibal was already his.

The dogs were barking outside, happy, oblivious. There was a time when Alana, imagining him to be lacking in self awareness, said she thought he liked dogs because they didn't lie, they were loyal. She was right enough about that. He did hate the human capacity for needless lying. But hadn't he committed his own cardinal sin? Hadn't he lied for no reason but his own fractured self esteem? The dogs didn't care, they forgave him his weaknesses because they loved him...

Just like Hannibal was doing... forgiving him. Who was he to tell Hannibal that his love, his loyalty wasn't enough? That it wasn't worth the effort? When Hannibal's heart, his forgiveness, his loyalty, might be the only ones in this whole stupid world that were worth anything at all to Will.

He picked up the phone. Activated the service, gave it some time in case Hannibal needed to get home or get to the phone. He might not survive, if having made the decision, Hannibal didn't answer. He had to answer to safe guard the ragged tatters of Will's sanity. Please Hannibal. Please, I'm sorry. Just, don't forget me yet please.

When he couldn't wait a second longer, he picked up the phone and called the only number programmed into it. It rang twice, before Hannibal picked up.

"William"

"Hannibal"

"You found me"

"I did"

Thank god

For the first time in weeks, Will could breathe again. They had so much to do, so much to plan, so much to sort out. But right now, he could breathe again. It was a start.

"I found your present Hannibal"

"I wasn't sure if you'd remember"

"How could I ever forget?... *I will never leave him. It will be this, always, for as long as he will let me*"

"William..."

Hannibal's voice carried a tenderness that none of their previous associates could even imagine. god Will missed him so much it hurt.

"Everything hurts Hannibal. I feel so lost without you. I feel soul sore... Abigail."

"Will... why did you lie? No one had to die. We could've left that night, any night."

"Doing the right thing for the wrong reason seemed unimaginably selfish, to torturously mercurial. Everything we've gone through... I couldn't risk us... I couldn't risk your future like that. No matter how much I wanted to. Physicists say that any thing that could happen has happened, a million different possibilities on the head of a pin, world after world fanning out into infinity, pivoting on every choice, splitting off into a new universe with every choice, every single time. Every possible iteration of us is out there somewhere, in the sea of realities. In this one, we just had to end like this, I was never what you-"

Hannibal hummed, a grumbling protective sound that Will had gotten comfortable with over the last two years. The sound dug into his sternum and made a home next to his heart.

"William this isn't the end of us, how could it be the end? Why would it be the end?"

"How can you forgive everything I've done? How can you even speak to me when I almost ruined everything?"

"My love, if everything that can happen has happened, and everything that happens here simply is the thing that happens here, then in this world I'm yours for always or as long as you want me. If you can forgive me, of course I can forgive you. Forgiveness like love may start small, a lonely ember but they both grow over time. It's the natural course of things. The why is less relevant then the fact of it. Concrete, constant, and immeasurably vast. It's not a

matter of right or wrong, good or evil, the press of 'could be' or 'should be' pale in comparison to the stark burning desperate constant hunger I have for you. When it comes to you, I could never be sated, would never want to be"

"God Hannibal, you make betrayal sound so romantic. You still want me to come?"

"The Will Graham I met initially believed he was undeserving of the life he needed to be happy. That man would never express his boundaries so firmly as to betray someone, he was so squashed down into himself, he couldn't breathe or think, much less refuse. I'm not incredibly fond of your timing I confess, but I adore the fact of your strongly worded no. So yes Will, I still need you... here with me. I still want you to come"

The world felt pinpoint small and horrifyingly vast in that moment. His answer was predetermined by fate, or his desires... or the devil himself.

"Then I'll come"

Will could feel the shift that came with Hannibal's radiant honest smile. The one he reserved just for Will. It traveled through the phone line to settle on his brow, knowing, needing, wanting, eternal.

Will had an inkling of who he was becoming.he knew what he would need to be that person now, he knew who he needed. Now he just had to get there, get to him, get to Hannibal.

"Ready or not here I come"

Ha that didn't sound ominous at all.

---

5 months later

It turned out that, 'or not' was the real sticking point in the phrase ready or not. The sad fact was they weren't ready yet. There were so many pieces to put on the board. To many parts of the plan had to be last minute rewritten due to their current circumstances. So many things that had to be gotten ready before he could go running around Europe after Hannibal.

They had to set everything up on the European end, their cover identities were the first order of business. Then once those were set up, they had to get Alana working at the Verger estate long enough for Margot to begin courting her. That was taking a little English on the ball, so to speak.

Then there was Jack and Bella. They needed Jack for the final part of the plan, so the plan had to wait till Jack was available. No one wished to disturb their hospice time.

The world held different kinds of monsters.

Sure they were the kinds of monsters who would slink out of the dark and eat you for their own incomprehensible reasons, but they weren't the kind of monsters to tear the last few

pages of an epic love story out of the book. Hannibal made that abundantly clear, so they would have to wait their turn. Bella came first. It was a process.

Finally they were ready. Will didn't know for sure why he was so nervous. Hannibal said he forgave him. But it'd been months since they'd seen each other last, and those circumstances were bad.

Very Bad.

What if he'd changed his mind? What if Hannibal couldn't love him anymore? His mind spun and spun on 'what if' and 'maybe'.

The flight to Paris itself was uneventful. They'd had their interim cover identities, the ones they were using for this part of the plan, set up for months. The trick to hiding in plain sight wasn't showing them nothing, it was convincingly selling them a completely wrong thing. Just a little sleight of hand on an international scale.

Once he arrived in Paris, he was only at the hotel long enough to wash up, double check his identity (***Antony Dimmond, pretentious poetry fuck),*** and make sure he had everything he needed for tonight. Then it was time to head to the Gala, to see Hannibal, to hunt with him properly. Once he was in the ebb and flow of the academic party, the crowd swallowed him without remark. He'd had years of practice blending in with academia. No one paid him any mind at all, which was the way he preferred it. He found a place out of the way to watch the crowd, to wait for Hannibal.

Be patient. Be invisible

It was hard to imagine what he'd do or say when he finally saw Hannibal again. Tell him that he forgives him? That he understands why Abigail had to be the sacrificial lamb? Kiss him? Slap him? Drag him to the nearest posh bathroom and fuck him senseless? Gut him like a fish and leave him bleeding on that same bathroom floor? Tell him he loves him? That he's in love with him still? Tell him that he misses him? That he's mad at himself? Tell him that he's afraid Hannibal can never forgive him? That he's afraid he can never forgive himself?

He grabbed two champagne flutes off the next passing silver serving tray to stem the tide of thinking way to much. This whole event was making his bones itch. There were way to many people, to many academically elitist, extremely rich people. That was one of his least favorite flavors of living people. The only thing they were good for was stew.

Then, like a miracle in leather... there he was, saving Will again. not the Hannibal Lecter the masses knew with his loud fastidious suits and primly fussy hair. No, this was the man he fell in love with under the moon. The love of his life, able to move fluidly through any crowd, belonging to none of them, reflecting them all flawlessly, the perfect human mirror, as at home in head to toe black leather as the tailored suits. Will Graham's heart living outside his body.

And fuck did he look amazing in black leather. Will took another drink of his champagne, this time making it slow, sensuous, showing the line of his throat, all that skin, blood rushing so close to the surface. Vulnerable.

Will felt incredibly vulnerable. The best kind of vulnerable. It was sexy.

Hannibal was pretending not to see him, his alert body language betraying the fact that he was anything but oblivious. Will finished the first glass of champagne and sauntered over. Mentally going over all the things he'd learned about Antony Dimmond from his social media. A poet, educated, cocky, urbane, witty, queer, condescending. They'd chosen him for a reason after all, several really. Will resisted the urge to wrap his arms around Hannibal and never let go. It was hard though. He gestured vaguely with his champagne flute, nodding at Hannibal.

"Anthony Dimmond"

Hannibal's eyes lit up, radiant with joy.

"Boris Yakov"

Nothing ever made Will feel as loved, as beloved as Hannibal did just looking at him. He didn't trust himself to not lose his composure if they touched right now. It would have to wait until they had more privacy. His body was already threatening to advertise his excitement much to loudly, at this society party, in his corduroy pants. *Yikes*

Will made eye contact with Hannibal, raising an eyebrow, gesturing down with the champagne glasses.

I'm sorry, this isn't a rejection. Please understand. I need more then a handshake, desperately

"Id offer a hand but..."

Hannibal smiled, flirtatious and amused, nodding in understanding.

"It's a double fisted kind of bash"

God, such a tease Hannibal, focus, stay on script Will. It's your script

"Do you know Roman well?"

Hannibal refused to say his line, just watching Will struggle with his libido and emotional need in fond amusement. He knew he deserved to twist a bit, but fuck. Ok fine, if he was going to be punished he could run with that. It's fuck Will Graham hours, and no one hated Will Graham more then he did. He leaned in teasing, conspiratorial.

"You were staring with the thinly veiled disdain of a man who does know him. I was his TA at Cambridge. He was insufferable even then"

Hannibal only smiled, encouraging him to continue dragging his own boring person suit by association.

Ok fine, let's play rough Hannibal

"Have you read his books? They're terrible, you know they're terrible, you're just to polite to say. Blink if you agree."

Hannibal, curious where this was going, trying not to giggle at Will's theatrics, only cocked his head ever so slightly, like a dog trying to comprehend his drunken master's overly effusive rambling. He blinked, once, twice, almost breaking character in his amusement. God he was so in love with this man, this monster. This fallen angel, Hannibal Lecter.

Let me catch you my love, down here in the dark and stinking places

Will used the opportunity in the way Hannibal intended it be used, he leaned in even closer. They were almost touching now, close enough for Will to whisper giggle in his ear.

"See?"

He gestured from his spot practically in the hollow of Hannibal's throat. From here he could smell all his feelings, the way he'd been taught to harness his hyper-intense autistic senses over the last two and half years, to use them to his benefit. Hannibal smelled like concern, excitement, arousal, love, violence.

Not that different from how he himself smelled probably. Love and Violence, the foundation of their private language. He looked across the room, toward Roman, giving Hannibal time and access to scent him as well, to know Will's heart as well as his words. He hadn't been this happy in months. The tingle of Hannibal's breath on his throat was intoxicating, he laughed softly, waving his champagne glass broadly.

"Well of course it doesn't stop him squatting over his keyboard and depositing a fresh one every six to eight months... It takes me six to eight months to write one line"

Hannibal, crinkled his face, genuinely curious now.

Why wouldn't you see me sooner?

"Why?"

Rebuilding yourself from scratch was harder then it sounded and it sounded impossible. If he'd come sooner, it would've been to easy to rebuild himself in Hannibal's image. Neither one of them wanted that, not really.

"Poetry's hard. To hard for Roman. Well it was easier for him to slide into academia and dissect the work of others then it was to stand in his own work, his own world."

Hannibal nodded slightly in acknowledgement, he would be happy to be the one appreciating someone else's words tonight.

"One can appreciate another's words without dissecting them"

Will's heart beat hammered in excitement, the hounds catching the fox's scent. He couldn't wait. He could admit it now, how badly he wanted, needed this.

Finally.

Hannibal made meaningful, loving, longing eye contact with Will, tongue barely perceptibly running over his canine teeth. A vicious smile glowing in his eyes.

"Though on occasion dissection is the only thing that'll do"

Sometimes it was the only thing at all.

-

When Roman Fell wandered out of the party, later then he probably should at his age, he was floating on a cloud of peer adulation. As the heavy front doors swung open, he noted it'd been raining earlier. He should get the Mercedes washed.

Two men leaned against a motorcycle right in front of the doors. The first one was leaning casually alert, in a way that defied gravity as far as he understood it, though physics wasn't his area of expertise. The man had a purposeful energy. He was a silvered sandy blonde, around his age, dressed head to toe in black leather like James Dean in 'Rebel Without a Cause'. He seemed to be watching the door intently, almost entirely ignoring the smaller dark haired man draped languidly over his shoulder, whispering something... or possibly mouthing his ear.

The blonde man's bright eyes cut through the late night darkness making Roman shudder. He wrapped his scarf more tightly around his neck, blinking subtly to break the uncomfortable eye contact.

When he opened his eyes again it was just the blonde man. The second man disappeared, like a shadowy apparition. Roman paused, something rang some alarm deep in his chest, whispered something is wrong. Something is very wrong. The man smiled flatly at him.

"Bonsoir"

Criminals weren't polite right? He was over reacting.

"Bonsoir...?"

He needed to get home. Roman took great pains to not show his fear. He was very careful not to rush, not to look back. It wasn't dignified. He was much to well educated to go running through the streets after dark, like a child.

Who's afraid of the big bad wolf?

If he'd looked back he might've seen the second man back again. His dark hair and long black peacoat blending seamlessly into the shadows. His head down, efficient, focused, like a dog following the rabbit's scent. Tracking him.

But he didn't look. He was Roman Fell, an internationally lauded academic, a professional. Nothing bad ever befell men like him. He was invincible.

Finally, he was almost home, safe and sound, he could get into the light, out of this creeping, creepy dark.

Roman's stomach plummeted. The over serious leather man on the motorcycle was here too somehow, in his yard, on his sidewalk, leaning against the motorcycle again, blocking the path into his own house, blocking his path to safety.

Something is very wrong here

The man smiled a genuine, sharp smile this time, head cocked, watching.

"Bonsoir"

Roman Fell didn't have time to register the strong, capable body suddenly pressed against his back, the black leather glove over his mouth, or the needle prick in his neck.

Roman Fell, sagged into Will's arms. He would not wake up ever again. Will laughed as he caught him under the arms, dry and vicious, eyes riveted to Hannibal.

"Bonsoir"

Hannibal nodded, already moving towards the front door.

"I do believe you're right my dear William. It's going to be a lovely evening. Are you hungry?"

Will shifted Roman in his arms slightly to shrug in feigned indifference.

"I could eat"

Hannibal's smile was electric.

It was going to be a very good night

Lydia got home much later then she'd been expecting. The house should be dark and still at this time of night.

It wasn't.

The door was unlocked, that wasn't right. All the lights were on too. It was so late, much to late for a man as habit oriented as her husband to have all the lights on. Her anxiety spiked as she slowly tiptoed through the halls of her own home, on high alert. There was a pool of soft yellow light floating out of the kitchen dining area. It seemed so warm, welcoming, reminding her of midnight snacks and late night conversations.

A man was sitting at their kitchen table, ash blonde, posture that said old money, well dressed, civilized. So very civilized.

He smiled fondly at the space behind her head.

"Bonsoir"

A dry, malicious laugh whispered like a malignant fever dream, echoing off her high ceilings, rolling through the empty hallways, everywhere and nowhere at once.

She did not get a chance to scream.

End Notes

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